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THE FIRST MORNING IN THE SCHOOL-ROOM.

WANTED, A GOVERNESS.

CHAP. I.—MY FIRST HOME AND MY FIRST SITUATION.
I CAN see it all now with the freshness and reality of yesterday—the quiet, old-fashioned, red-brick house in the pleasant country town of G—; the

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row of stiff, clipped limes which fronted the parlour windows; the shady garden behind, with its tall cypresses, its huge laurels, and prolific mulberry tree. It was, so I have thought since, somewhat a dull, damp garden, and no annuals ever attained

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to any high degree of excellence there; but pinks we had in abundance, and roses too—fine cabbage-roses, which, let rose lovers say what they may, have a sweeter scent than all the delicate flowers of that lovely surname bearing the fanciful, new-fangled appendages of the present day. Jessamine and sweet-williams, stocks, clove-carnations, and wall-flowers, flourished there also. Our garden, too, was a piece of family pride, for garden and house both had belonged to our grandfather, ay, and to his father before him.

There were six of us in family; I had two brothers older than myself, and two sisters and a brother younger. As an elder girl, I believe that not more of exertion or self-denial fell to my lot than is usually the share of elder daughters; and our house was so perfectly peaceful, so intensely yet so calmly happy, that the labour which we had each to perform was truly and emphatically a labour of love, knowing neither weariness nor cessation.

Perhaps we have each of us had at some time of our life, and in the inner temple of our hearts, an idol. I had mine once upon earth, and now in heaven. I am not quite sure but that she sometimes comes before me and the Holy One, when I think of her in one of the "many mansions." My idol was my mother. Oh, how I loved that mother! Her memory mingles with soft cradle hymns, silvery tones, gentle touches, fond heart-warm embraces, holy, earnest prayers, and self-denying actions. But I must refrain. If I were about to write my mother's history, I might fill pages; but she *was* my mother, and I may be partial. Delicate and fragile she always was; but I never remember her in my childish days to have been quite laid aside. I can now see her gliding down the old oak staircase; or, in her neat muslin dress, floating along the gloomy passages, almost as noiselessly as an angel might have passed along; or leading some little one in the grassy garden, telling pleasant stories of birds and bees. She never told sad stories; they were ever as full of hope and joy and purity as she was herself. I love to think of all this: I love to picture her thus, or, better still, to see her with my grey-haired father, many years her senior, her arm fondly round his neck, with a beautiful mixture of the wife and the daughter, and the most exquisite tenderness united to the deepest veneration. She had bright, sunny, curling hair in those days, and as it floated on his shoulders, I remember feeling how exultant he must have been that my mother was really his wife.

Such was my home in early life. Neither relics nor luxuries were there, but simply that which our dear old English tongue so aptly calls by the untranslatable word *comfort*, and peace. I said we were not rich. From very early childhood this was impressed upon us, and I think we had all a dim perception of the fact that, at some distant period of time, we might be obliged to earn our own living.

I had a great deal of the castle-builder's nature in me, for I was an imaginative, sensitive, and delicate child, and very often my mother had to call me down from the heights of my airy fabrics to the forgotten stocking or wristband in my hand. I was a dreaming child; and here again would I

devoutly thank God for a *good* mother. My castles were never rudely demolished by her gentle hand, nor were my confused notions of things ever worse confounded by ridicule or sharp reproof. Sympathy, ever-flowing sympathy, was the secret of our household peace, and while every thought was poured out into the treasury of my mother's love, the defective ones were calmly taken up and considered in their true light, and by degrees abandoned as useless.

So time passed on. My father was, as I have said, an old man. The early part of his life had been spent in pursuits of a purely literary and classical character. He had lived for well nigh forty years in a sort of monastic retirement, just getting his living at a desk, and devoting every spare hour to his darling studies, without any ambition for great things in this world; but at last he astonished all the neighbourhood of G— by going into business as an estate agent; and yet more astonished were they, when he took to himself the young orphan daughter of the clergyman of the parish, who was left alone in the world, and in the old house of which we have spoken.

My dear father certainly made a great mistake when he went into business; his heart was never in it, and yet, like many clever men, he had now and then a grand scheme which was to be the making of him and his family, and was to turn his wife's little capital—for he had none of his own—into a splendid fortune for her and his daughters. I was too young to know much about the matter, but I am very sure of this, that no large fortune was made, and the small one became year by year sensibly less. I often recall now the resolution and calm self-possession of my excellent mother at this time, and the lessons of preparation which she gave us for that which she knew must come. There had always been much pains taken with our education. My father devoted whole evenings to our instruction in Latin, and even in Greek. My mother, whose own mother was a German, spoke and understood that language perfectly, and of French and music, which were among her accomplishments, she had no superficial knowledge. For a home education, ours was certainly superior, and year by year our advancement became more seriously the object of my mother's exertions. We read much, partly to please our father, and partly from the early-acquired love of knowledge.

My sister Mary was very like her mother in tastes and in quality of mind. Agnes had from childhood been the object of solicitude, from ill health, and no one ever thought of her but as one to be petted and nursed. My elder brothers were excellent, steady, every-day lads, and Edward, the last of the flock, was but a lovely child of three years old when I had attained my sixteenth year. It was at this time that my father began to droop. Heavier and heavier rested the hand on my mother's arm as they paced the grassy garden; slowly and more slowly did his footsteps sound on the pavement as he returned to dinner. Earlier and yet earlier was his hour for retiring; shorter and yet shorter the laboured breathing; and yet we were not alarmed. I say we; our mother saw it all, and night and day, as she has told me, she prayed for strength against that coming storm which she saw gathering in the horizon.

It came at last, but not as a storm. One glorious summer's evening in August, just as the sun had lit up the standing corn, till it shone like gold in its rays, my father quietly sank to sleep upon her arm. He had gone to bed at his usual hour, and, according to his custom, had laid his head on his faithful wife's shoulder, to gain relief from the oppression on his breathing, while she sang him to sleep, as she would have sung a child. Her hymn that night was checked by a change in the breathing; she laid down the gray head upon the pillow, and, in a moment, it was all ended. That night our gentle mother was a widow, and we were fatherless!

It was no surprise to us, when the will was read, to hear that we were *poor* orphans. We had long been prepared for this. Happily, my eldest brother had so far a turn for practical matters that the business, which his father left him as an inheritance, was more likely to prosper with him than with his predecessor. Horace, the second, had for some time held a situation with our family surgeon. My mother should stay in the old house—that was settled. Agnes and little Edward should remain there too, and Mary and I must go forth into the world. But Mary was too young for a governess; and the principal ladies' school in G—at this very time advertising for an artied pupil, our dear Mary was "artied," as it is called; and it was only Emilie, the writer of these pages, who remained unprovided for.

We pored over the columns of the "Times" henceforth; we dived into every advertising corner of the journals; we enlisted every friend in our service; and if one day our hopes were high, at another they sank again, as, one after another, our applications were treated with favour or the reverse. Two journeys I took to London, only to return disappointed and depressed. Of one of the situations I had felt so confident, that when I came back late in the evening, and reported my non-success, I wept long and bitterly. My mother, mother-like, tried to cheer and console me.

"It is always thus, dear Emilie," she said. "In our first efforts for independence we are usually made to feel our dependence. Come, come, I have the 'Times' to-night. Let us look once more."

My heart sickened at the thought of any "Times" advertisements now; but we looked carefully down the columns.

"Wanted, chamber-maids, house-maids, cooks, ladies'-maids, but how few governesses to-day," said I. "Horace has the 'Morning Herald,'" continued I; "now, Horace, look out for something for me, there's a dear brother." And Horace, eagerly glancing his eye down the columns, saw an advertisement headed, "Wanted, a Governess!" and immediately read as follows:—

"Wanted, in a private family of the utmost respectability, a young lady, fully competent to impart instruction to three little girls and a boy, varying from the ages of four to eleven. She must be a perfect mistress of the usual branches of an English education, including geography, the use of the globes, arithmetic, history, and composition. None need apply who are not proficient in singing and piano-forte playing, and fully com-

petent to teach and speak the French language with a Parisian accent. Some knowledge of German and Italian indispensable.—N.B. A young person of lady-like manners and agreeable disposition would find this a desirable home."

Once more I started by an early train, and once more prepared to present myself for approbation. This time my journey ended at N—, and very glad I was, with my country habits and tastes, to be spared the necessity of entering the dreary city again.

I had some distance to walk before I arrived at the house which was specified on my address. It was at a chemist's shop at the extreme end of N—, and when I had accomplished the weary walk, in a dusty windy day in March, I found that I must retrace my steps, and walk almost to the very point whence I had set out, to arrive at the gentleman's house of the "utmost respectability." It certainly was encouraging in its outward aspect—a pleasantly-situated, elegantly-built, moderate-sized villa, with large garden and shrubbery, and everything externally to justify the promise of the advertisement. The door was opened by a little page, who took my note civilly enough; but on hearing certain words, which I plainly caught through the open door, he somewhat altered his conduct on his return:—"Oh, don't go yet, Mrs. Turner; it is only a young person come after my governess's situation. Show her into the breakfast room, Rollins."

I was trying to digest that disagreeable word "*only*," so offensive to one's natural, albeit young, pride, when Mrs. Serle entered. She was a fashionable, rather plain, lady-like woman, and so far from putting me at my ease in her presence, she scanned me with the keen curiosity and sharp-sightedness of a woman thoroughly "up to this business," until I was every moment growing more and more uncomfortable and distressed.

"I ventured to reply personally to your advertisement," I said, timidly; "I—"

"Ah, yes, but you look so very young. Have you ever been out before?"

"Never."

"Have you lost a relative lately?"

My lips tried to say, "My father." Her eye never moved from my face, although tears, which I could not keep back, coursed down my cheeks.

"Very young: and what can you teach?"

I said I had considered the requirements of her advertisement, and believed I was competent to undertake the situation. I had not learned French at Paris, but I trusted that as my mother was of a German family, and I could speak that language fluently, it might be considered equivalent. She thought otherwise, depreciated the use of German, and spoke of French as the "language of the world." I could only sit and blush, and feel very uncomfortable. However, she passed by this defect, and said she should be willing to try me, if my references were satisfactory.

"You will be obliged," she continued, "to be in the school-room at seven, and to attend to lessons until eight. Of course, you will not object to assisting your three little pupils to dress. From nine to twelve you will be in the school-room again. You will then walk, if the weather per-

mits, until two. You will dine with the children at our luncheon, at that hour; and at three you will have lessons again until five. Our dinner hour is six; the children join us at dessert, and, as your manners appear good, I think I shall feel no difficulty in your accompanying them into the dining-room. They will also take tea with us, and you will preside both at tea and breakfast time. They retire at eight, and you will have plenty of time then to do a little plain sewing, which my governesses are always accustomed to do for me. I must tell you that I never allow the children to be left. They must be your *sole* charge."

I sighed; it was involuntary.

"Shall I have any time at my own disposal, Mrs. Serle?" I said, timidly.

"What do you mean?" she replied.

"I mean that I should like a little time in the day, that I could call my own. I shall like to read, and improve myself sometimes. I am very young, and if I am always imparting knowledge, do you not think I ought to take something in?"

"I have nothing to do with that; your education is presumed to be finished, or why offer yourself for my situation? You have but to rise an hour earlier if you are studiously inclined."

I was silent, and at length said: "My salary."

"Your salary!—Yes, I think I should not object to giving you twenty pounds, although it is a large sum for so young a teacher. I don't know what Mr. Serle will say; but I dare say he will comply. I shall hope to see you on Monday;" and here, as though in great haste to complete the bargain, she rose, leaving me in too much perplexity and astonishment to say anything more than "Very well;" and the bell being rung, I left the room and the house, feeling, as I looked back to it, as though my home it could never be.

Wearily and dispirited I returned home. I had not tasted food since my breakfast, for it did not appear to have entered into my elect-employer's calculations, that a poor girl from G——, come for the governess's situation, could be either faint or tired; but that might be mere forgetfulness, and we will not be censorious. The tea was very sweet at home, I remember, and the welcome and the love sweeter still. My mother talked hopefully of my twenty pounds soon swelling to forty; and we went to bed, if not gay, at least cheerful and content.

There were but two days for my simple preparations; they were finished on the Saturday. The Sunday was my last at home. The bells, as they rang for service, seemed dirge-like, and my heart was very heavy as I knelt with the mourning family in the old pew for the last time.

I cannot describe the parting. I was leaving home, and the knowledge of this truth was sufficient to excuse the many, many tears which fell as I sat in the corner of the railway carriage. There was no one there but an elderly lady, who appeared so engrossed with a book, that I thought I might weep unnoticed; but presently, when my grief lulled a little, I saw that she was observing me, not curiously, but kindly, from a remote corner opposite. Soon she spoke. Oh! blessings on those voices which are tuned to gentleness and love! I knew at that very moment that the strange lady had not a cold heart.

"Going from home?"—and by this time she had moved her place, and sat close to me:—"for the first time is it?"

A sob was my only reply.

"Ah, it is a bitter trial, my dear. I remember my own feelings at first leaving home."

"Do you?" and I felt that we were no longer strangers.

"Are you—I hope I don't seem inquisitive—are you going to a situation?"

"Yes, and it is my *first*."

"Poor child! but"—and she spoke cheerily, "much, very much depends on yourself, whether you are happy there or not. I do not ask what kind of people your employers are. That matters little if you take a right heart with you to them. It is very difficult, I acknowledge; one is so apt to feel pride sometimes, and as though we lost caste, in entering for the first time on a life of dependence; but this is wrong."

"I know it, but it is natural."

"Don't you think, my dear, that He who counts the hairs of your head, and who placed you in circumstances where dependence (if you will have it so) is necessary, can comfort you and guide you in that life."

"Yes."

"Yes; but you still hang back. Now I have been a governess for thirty years of my life, and I will give you one or two hints which you may find useful; may I? They have been the result of some dear-bought experience. First—never mind how natural it is to feel otherwise—take this thought to your new home—'I am *not* lowering myself; I am in all respects the same as I was in my parents' house, simply compelled, under God's providence, to turn the talents and education which he gave me into a means of support.' This thought will be elevating; it will preserve your self-respect; it will give you a feeling of *independence*. Then again, do not expect too much consideration and respect from those with whom you live. It is well to look at the case as it *is*—not as it *should* be. If you and I and human nature were better, governesses' situations would be happier; but here is a plain truth. You are engaged to do a certain work—to *teach*. Now, depend upon it, there is too much selfishness abroad, for any reasonable expectations that a lady who engages you for this work should consider herself bound to give you more than your *stipulated* remuneration, and a fair amount of kind and civil treatment—"

I interrupted her: "Not a person to whom they commit their *children*? Surely, surely they are entitled to more than common confidence and kindness!"

My new friend shook her head.

"I am looking at the matter, my dear, as it *is*, not as you and I may think it ought to be. Keep in mind then this one thought—'I will never take a slight where it is not intended; I will not expect or require home-love and tenderness under a stranger's roof; and I will settle this point that, after all, my object in life is to be *duty*, not *comfort*; and that my duty, and pleasure too, should consist in devotion to the dear little ones.'"

"Hard work!"

"Hard! yes; but not *impossible*; for I hope

you know something of a strength beyond your own."

I was sorry to see my companion now prepare to arrange her bag, and to seek for her railway ticket, as though she were soon to leave me. She got down at Croydon. I envied her the welcome which awaited her on the platform, from a bright, beautiful girl of sixteen, who greeted her with a loving kiss. I wondered, as one is apt to wonder about our railway companions, in what relation that pretty girl stood to my plain elderly acquaintance; but the train moved on, and I did not find that out until some time afterwards.

It was with a beating heart, yet, if I can recollect aright, with an earnest resolve to be true and faithful to my charge, that I awaited my introduction to my new pupils. They came into the breakfast-room in answer to a summons from their mamma, looking exactly as I felt, very awkward. Three nice-looking girls they were; but they gave me the impression, soon confirmed by facts, of children who needed sympathy. You may soon read that want in a young face. You may read it in the thoughtful, earnest, reserved child's, and in that of the open, frolicsome, merry one. You may read it in the loving, tender, heart-full face, and in the neglected, ill-appreciated, unamiable countenance. Much has been written and sung of mother's love; but, alas! that love, like the diamond, is seldom found in purity. The mere instinct of motherhood is far below that beautiful, almost holy affection, which forgets and renounces self in devotion to the child. Oh, mothers! if you would not walk through life's evening hours uncheered by your children's affection, dedicate to them the flower of your age. Be much with them, pray much for them, and in your first joy of maternity—common, remember, to you and to the brute creation—look ever onward and upward, and think of the embryo soul in the baby form you clasp.

"Show Miss Maitland the school-room, Lizzy," said Mrs. Serle to the eldest of the children, who looked at me with a more suspicious and scrutinizing glance than her sisters.

"You will have a holiday to-day, and you must show your governess the garden; and be very good children, and mind all she says to you."

I rose, and was rather surprised that not one of the children would take my offered hand. Lizzy decidedly hung back, the others put each a finger in its mouth, and I stood looking, I have no doubt, almost as silly as the children, when the door burst open, and a fine light-haired boy of eight entered. He sprang to his mother's arms, and said, with the freedom of a spoiled child: "Mamma, that tiresome nurse has turned me out of the nursery, because I woke baby."

"Hush, Allan, Allan! speak nicely to Miss Maitland," his mother replied.

"Oh, are you the governess?" he said, in a little patronising way of his own. "I'm glad you are come. Now that nasty nurse has nothing to do with me."

I cannot say that I felt equally pleased at the prospect of guardianship of a little rebel such as Master Allan appeared; but, as he offered me his hand, I proceeded at once to the school-room with my four pupils, and tried to make myself as agreeable to them as I could.

The nurse, who was there with the two younger children, making a sort of temporary nursery of the school-room, for the sake of preserving order, eyed me askance on my entrance. I had always been taught to treat our domestics with courtesy and respect in my childhood's home—let no one smile at the word *respect*—and it had never entered into my heart to conceive that I could be an object of suspicion or dislike to them; but I was mistaken.

I began to notice the baby, but I soon found that would not do at all. Nurse appeared to think it a great liberty when I asked if I might take it for a few minutes. Little Jessie, a pretty, baby-like little thing of two years old, appeared inclined to be sociable, which nurse observing, remarked: "Come, dear, we shall not be wanted here now;" and, taking Jessie's hand, stalked out, leaving me with my new pupils in the school-room, which, with but short leaves of absence, was to be my prison henceforth.

The day passed wearily enough. I was too late for the dinner hour of the family; it had not occurred to any one that I could be hungry; and when I went down to dessert with the children, I was so honestly hungry that I was glad to accept a glass of wine and a biscuit, although I saw that my taking the wine was neither expected nor desired.

There was company in the house—a lady and two daughters; and I think Mrs. Serle did make some pretence at introducing me; but "our governess" were the only words that reached my ears, and possibly those of the ladies, for they gave me something between a nod and a stare by way of recognition, which said as plainly as possible, "Keep your place." Mr. Serle spoke kindly to me, but he was pompous to every one, and that he should have been otherwise to his children's governess was most unlikely.

Mrs. Serle only noticed me as she would have noticed any menial of whom she required an act of service. "Miss Maitland, be so kind as to peel that pear for Lizzy." "Miss Maitland, pray look at Allan." Allan was piling wine-glasses into a Chinese pagoda. "Miss Maitland, that plate of Emmeline's is too near the edge of the table." Not a word of any kind, however, which would recognise my capability of enjoying social intercourse, or common conversation, was addressed to me during that long meal; and yet I was at *their table*. Oh, when the day was ended—when my labours in the dressing and hair-curling of my pupils were at an end—how did my heart ache and my whole soul sicken for my mother's love! Yet how earnest was my prayer, in the loneliness of my new grief, that I might not fail—no, not for a moment.

The morning dawn was, for the first time, unwelcome. I was sleeping, as youth rarely fails to sleep, even under the pressure of sorrow, soundly and even tranquilly, when I was roused by a quick rap at the door. It was the housemaid's summons to warn me that it was half-past six. My own toilette was soon completed; and, anxious to perform my duties, I hastened to the bed-room opening out of my own, where my three little pupils slept. Every one who knows anything about children, knows how contrary oft-times are their humours at rising and at going to rest.

I did not effect their dressing until half-past seven, and then how little time remained for lessons! We had just stationed ourselves round the table, and I was beginning to gain a little insight into the extent of their knowledge (so far as books were concerned), when a loud cry startled me.

"That is Allan," said Lizzy, the eldest girl, pertly, I thought. "Go, Miss Maitland, and dress him."

I looked at the little speaker.

"I will ring for the nurse," I said; "or will you, dear, go and tell her?"

"Oh dear, no; Miss Fellowes, our last governess, always dressed Allan. Nurse can't manage him at all."

The screams were now so loud that the bell of Mrs. Serle's chamber, ringing as loudly as bell could ring, was drowned in the clamour. I was a little irritated by a hasty summons from nurse to go and dress Master Allan.

"I did not know," I said, "that it was expected of me, but I will do it to-day;" and rising, very cool externally, but very warm within, I went to the child, who sat on the side of his little bed crying lustily, and who, at my approach, declared I should not touch him, because I had been so long in coming. I had soothed an irritable child many a time before; but this was an unusually trying case. The noise from the school-room, from the little ones left to themselves, was intolerable. Allan was all but unmanageable, and I lost heart and patience, plying myself up with the resolution that I would not do all this nurse-maid's work; I cannot be both nurse and governess, and so I will tell Mrs. Serle. And so, before I left the breakfast-room that morning—where it was my duty to make tea and coffee for the family and assembled company, and be content with its smell myself, or with such occasional sips as were permitted me—I asked permission, perhaps rather *mal-à-propos*, to speak to Mrs. Serle. She looked as much astonished as Majesty might be expected to have looked at a sudden request for an audience from a commoner; and not so graciously as a queen might have spoken, she answered her governess: "I am engaged now; I shall come into the school-room in the course of the day. Go now with the young ladies."

I went, but the tone and the manner roused all the old pride, and I felt—I cannot, cannot stand this.

Our lessons began. I found the children, for many months to come, would have little occasion for the Parisian accent, or for the very elements of the language of my almost father-land, so utterly ignorant were they of all but the very elements of their own tongue. I was hearing Lizzy read in Markham's English History, with about as much fluency as a Chinese might be expected to read our language, when the parlour-maid came in with a basket containing sundry trimmings and lace, with a request from Mrs. Serle that I would make Mrs. East a morning cap like the pattern. I looked, I have no doubt as I felt, astonished. The children, scarcely settled to their employment, were at once unsettled again, and I could not in my perplexity tell what answer to send down. The servant, a pleasant, good-humoured girl, said: "I know very well what you are thinking of, Miss. It is hard

work. Our last governess used to do such things, but the children got sadly neglected."

"Is it in any hurry?" I asked.

"I was to tell you, Miss, that my mistress and Mrs. East are going out to luncheon at two, and this cap will be wanted then, as the milliner has disappointed the lady."

"But I do not think I can make a cap, Jane; I never tried."

"Dear me, our governesses always do those kind of jobs; what a pity! Shall I tell Missus?"

"No," I replied; "leave the material; I will see."

"Now, Lizzy, go on reading;" but Lizzy was absorbed in her contemplation of the lace and the pretty peach-coloured ribbon, and I had to assume a tone of authority, not quite natural to me, before she would proceed.

The morning came to an end, but not, however, without a feeling of fatigue of which I had never before been conscious. The lessons prescribed in Mrs. Serle's very extensive plan, were not above half accomplished, mainly because the children were ignorant of the first principles of most of the subjects laid down therein. I had nearly finished a cap creditably, although I ought not to say it, when Mrs. Serle entered. She was extremely pleased with my performance, and I heard her say to her visitor that "I bade fair to be a very useful person." I was so glad to please, that I did not take into account the drudgery before me; and I went about my other duties with a lighter heart.

At one o'clock I was a little surprised to receive a summons to the nursery. I was "expected." I found, to take the baby and the next little girl into the garden, when the others walked, during the nurse's meal. Now, I loved little babies, and should not have felt it hard work, but I found it impossible to watch thoroughly over my four pupils and these two little ones for the space of a whole hour.

On our way to the shrubbery, I passed the kitchen window. I envied—and who can blame me?—the social, cheerful intercourse of the domestic servants. How they seemed to have laid all care aside, and to be refreshing themselves in this hour of rest by pleasant, lively chat.

I was very tired and very low when nurse came and took the baby. She, rudely so, as it seemed to me, complained of my having allowed it to get dirty, and was sorry to see how I had let Miss Dora run on the grass. I received her remark with as dignified a silence as I could, and again made up my mind to speak to Mrs. Serle on the matter.

The luncheon hour came at last, and I accompanied my three pupils to the dining-room. The Misses East and Mr. Serle did not give the least acknowledgment of my presence, and my meal passed in silence on my part. The children and the visitors were allowed to talk, but it was not expected of the governess; and I never ate a more dismal meal.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

ATTENTION TO YOUR OWN BUSINESS.—A man who had become rich by his own exertions, was asked by a friend the secret of his success. "I have accumulated," replied he, "about one-half my property by attending strictly to my own business, and the other half by letting other people's alone."

FRANCOIS ARAGO.

(From the French.)

THE journals have lately announced the death of the celebrated astronomer and mathematician, M. Arago. A brief notice of his useful and laborious life may interest our readers. Dominique François Arago was born at Estagel, near Perpignan, on the 26th of February, 1786. His father, who, after the revolution, filled the office of cashier to the bank at Perpignan, sent him at an early age to study in the public school of that town. He was afterwards sent to Montpellier, where he was prepared for the entrance examination into the Polytechnic school. On entering that establishment in 1804, he took first place, and preserved that pre-eminence through every subsequent ordeal.

After leaving the Polytechnic, he was attached to the Observatory, as secretary to the longitude office; and in 1806 the emperor Napoleon, although M. Arago had conscientiously voted against his being made first consul for life, charged him, on the recommendation of Monge, with continuing the great geological operations of Delambre and Michain. In this undertaking, the object of which was to furnish a perfect measurement of an arc of the terrestrial meridian, in order to serve as a basis for a new system of land measure, he was aided by M. Biot and two Spanish commissioners, MM. Chaix and Rodriguez. The two French savans commenced their work by establishing a great imaginary triangle, destined to unite Ivica, one of the Balearic isles, to the coast of Spain. They pitched their tents on the apex of this triangle, that is to say, on the top of one of the highest mountains in Catalonia, in order, by signals, to put themselves in communication with M. Rodriguez, placed on the mountain of Campney in Ivica. Braving every change of season, they passed the winter months in these steep solitudes. "Often," says M. Biot, "the storms used to carry away our tents and displace our stations. M. Arago, with indefatigable perseverance, gave himself scarcely any rest either by day or night."

In 1807, their principal operations were finished. M. Biot, anxious to arrive by calculation at a definite result, set out for Paris, leaving M. Arago to complete the labour alone. Just then war broke out between France and Spain. Mistaken for a spy by the insurgent Majorcans, M. Arago had barely time to disguise himself as a peasant, and carry off the papers containing his observations. Thanks to the exactness of his Catalanian accent, he passed undiscovered through crowds of his enemies, and taking refuge at Palma, in the Spanish vessel which had brought him to the island, he succeeded in saving his instruments. The captain of the ship placed him in the citadel of Belun, in order to screen him from popular fury. There he remained for many weeks, completely absorbed in his calculations, and at length obtained his liberty, with permission to go to Algiers. Arrived there, the French consul put him on board an Algerine frigate sailing for Marseilles. They were already within sight of the French coast, when the frigate was attacked and conquered by a Spanish corsair. M. Arago was taken prisoner,

carried to the fortress of Rosas, thrown into the hulks at Palamas, and overwhelmed with ill usage. The dey, however, on hearing the insult offered to his flag, demanded and obtained the freedom of the captured crew. The vessel resumed her voyage; they nearly reached Marseilles, and the young philosopher fondly thought himself at the end of his misfortunes. Suddenly, however, a frightful storm from the north-west assailed the frigate, and cast her on the coast of Sardinia. No end to perils! The Sardinians and Algerines were at high war: to land would be to rush headlong into a fresh captivity. To add to their misfortunes, the vessel sprung a leak; and they at length decided on steering for the African coast. Their ship, half disabled and ready to founder, touched at Bongia, three days' journey distant from Algiers. In the disguise of a Bedouin, and under the guidance of a marabout, M. Arago reached Algiers, but was not so graciously received by the new dey as he had been by his predecessor, who in the meantime had been killed in a tumult. Thanks, however, to the persevering kind offices of the consul, he succeeded in recovering both his liberty and his mathematical instruments, and for the third time embarked for Marseilles. The war vessel in which he sailed had a very narrow escape of being captured by an English cruiser.

In 1809, the intrepid young philosopher trod once more his native soil. To reward him for his labours, the Academy of Sciences, contrary to its standing rule, admitted him as a member at the age of twenty-three; and the emperor named him professor at the Polytechnic school. There, as the honoured colleague of Laplace and Monge, he taught the analysis of geodesy during more than twenty years.

In 1830, M. Arago mingled for the first time in political life. During the memorable "three days of July," he worked hard to stop the effusion of blood, by interceding with marshal Marmont, whose friend he was. The elections which took place shortly afterwards placed him in the chamber as deputy from the department of the Pyrénées Orientales. On entering parliament he took his place amongst the "extreme left," between Lafitte and Dupont, and afterwards signed the public account of 1832.

He frequently spoke on questions connected with public instruction, with the shipping interest, and with the construction of canals, railroads, etc. His political adversaries themselves have frequently bowed to his authority, and rendered homage to the incomparable clearness of his arguments and the beauty of his language in public discussion. Being one of the heads of the party of the "extreme left," he was the first to pronounce the words—"Reform and rights of labour." It was he who led the most redoubtable attacks against the maintenance of detached forts. To his legislative labours he joined the functions of member of the council-general of the Seine, over which he presided for a long time, and which he induced several times to declare in favour of emancipating slaves in the colonies.

In the decline of a busy life, M. Arago was cast suddenly, by the explosion of 1848, into the midst of a revolutionary storm. He was proclaimed member of the provisional government,

and during the interim, minister of war, and minister of the marine.

In the peaceful paths of science the name of Arago has obtained a world-wide celebrity. He has rendered immense services, less perhaps by his own original discoveries, vast and important as they are, than by his rare talent in popularizing and generalizing knowledge, and by his admirable method of rendering the physical sciences intelligible in his astronomical lectures at the Observatory, in his academical reports, and in the notices with which he has enriched the "Annual Report of the Longitude Office."

As a scientific inventor, Arago discovered the principle of temporary magnetism, on which rests the electric telegraph; also chromatic and rotatory polarization, and magnetism by rotation. As a popular instructor, he every year delivered at the Observatory of Paris a course of delightful lectures on astronomy, which always attracted vast crowds. Equally versed in contemplative and in active science, he delighted in the wonders of the earth as well as in those of the sky: he wrote the eulogium of Watt as well as that of Herschel.

Several branches of physical science, especially optics and electro-magnetism, owe to him their recent progress. His discovery of magnetism by rotation gained for him, in 1829, from the Royal Society of London, the Copley medal—a distinction the more flattering that it had never before been bestowed on a Frenchman. It was honourable, too, to English candour and generosity, for Arago had contested with that nation several inventions of which they claimed the glory; amongst others, that of the steam-engine.

In 1830, M. Arago succeeded Fourier as perpetual secretary of the Scientific Academy (section of mathematical science). He was a member of all the learned academies of Europe, and the particular friend of Humboldt, Faraday, Brewster, Melloni, etc.: a fact which he related himself in May, 1852, in his letter to the minister of public instruction, on the occasion of his declining to take a required oath as director of the Observatory, and which, in his case, was dispensed with by especial favour.

But M. Arago was not merely the man of genius or the man of science; he was also the man of noble character, and of exalted moral feeling. When, in following his funeral car, the magic of memory called up before our eyes that noble head which we were no more to behold, what we loved best to recall was not the discoveries, the literary talents, the vast intelligence of the illustrious dead, but the moral dignity of his grand career. Never did science suffer humiliation in his person: he did not think that any adventitious distinctions could add honour to his worthy professors. One of his colleagues complaining one day that he had not received the insignia of some order with which he had been decorated, "Take my decorations," he said; "you shall have the first wearing of them, for I have never put them on."

Some one once remarked to M. Arago, that it was a shame that the honour of being raised to the English peerage had not been conferred upon James Watt. "So much the worse for the English peerage," replied he; "James Watt would have conferred honour upon it!"

During the last few months, his rapidly declining health forced M. Arago unwillingly to relinquish for a time his cherished studies, and seek for a renewal of strength in his native air.

"Adieu!" said he, as he was setting out, to one of his friends at the institution.

"Oh, no, M. Arago; not adieu, I hope we shall meet again."

"Yes," rejoined the philosopher; I trust we shall meet again, but it must be in heaven."

His foreboding was just. His state of health having slightly improved, he testified an anxious desire to return to Paris; and as soon as he arrived, despite of fatigue and the weakness occasioned by illness, insisted on resuming his duties as perpetual secretary. Once, a few weeks since, the members of the institute saw him, and witnessed with admiration the obstinate combat between the powerful mind and the feeble body. It was for the last time. To the end he resisted, and gave all that he had to give; dying, so to speak, in full harness. A veteran in the ranks of science, he fell honourably on the battle-field.

GILBERT WHITE AND SELBORNE.

THERE are few books which have obtained a more deserved or continuing popularity than Gilbert White's "Natural History of Selborne." The production of a private gentleman in an obscure village, it made its first appearance towards the close of the last century, in a modest though respectable guise, and with no other passport to favour than its own unassuming merits. These, however, were so great, and at that period of so unusual a kind, that the best judges foresaw the distinguished favour it would obtain, and prophesied its lasting acception with the public. That they were correct in their judgment the event has fully proved, seeing that at the present day there are few lovers of nature with whom reading is a habit, who are not familiar with the volume, and still fewer libraries upon the shelves of which it is not to be found. For our own part, we feel a pleasure in recording the fact that White's Selborne was the first book on natural history of which we have any distinct recollection; and we might perhaps trace to the early perusal of its engrossing pages, the source and origin of a not unkind prejudice in favour of everything that creeps and crawls, or runs, swims, or flies—a prejudice which has from time to time been the occasion of a great deal of pleasure, and not a little profit.

Before proceeding to detail the circumstances of a visit we lately paid to the scene of the tranquil life and labours of this worthy man, it may be as well, for the sake of those of our readers who are strangers to his history, to give a short summary of his biography, of which too little is known. Gilbert White was born at Selborne on the 18th of July, 1720. He was not a clergyman, as many persons suppose, but the grandson of a clergyman of the same name, who had been vicar of Selborne, and who was the son of Sir Sampson White, who was knighted by Charles the Second on his coronation. The father of the naturalist was Mr. John White, a barrister of the Middle Temple, who married an heiress, and ceased to practise at the



RESIDENCE OF GILBERT WHITE.

bar after his marriage. He had four sons, Gilbert, Thomas, John, and Henry—one of whom, Thomas, became a member of the Royal Society. John White was devoted to the study of natural history, and from him, without doubt, his son Gilbert derived his love for the same pursuit. He came to reside at Selborne in 1731, and died in 1759. Gilbert White was educated at Basingstoke, under the Rev. Thomas Wharton. He was admitted to Oriel College, Oxford, in December, 1739, and took a degree of bachelor of arts, in 1743; and in the following year was elected fellow of his college. He became Master of Arts in 1746, and subsequently served the office of proctor. He had several opportunities of accepting college livings; but his love of rural nature, and fondness for the pursuits of his early youth, induced him to decline all preferment, and to retire to the seclusion of his native village. In early life he was much attached

to Miss Mulso, afterwards Mrs. Chapone. He never married, but led the life of a philosophical bachelor, and was, to quote the words of an old dame in the village, who had nursed many of the family, "a still, quiet body."

Of his manner of life, the following extract from the pages of one of his biographers affords us a graphic and interesting account. "His diaries were kept with unremitting diligence; and in his annual migrations to Oriel College, and other places, his man Thomas, who seems to have been well qualified for the office, recorded the weather journal. The state of the thermometer, barometer, and the variations of the wind are noted, as well as the quantity of rain which fell. We have daily accounts of the weather, whether hot or cold, sunny or cloudy: we have also information of the first tree in leaf, and even of the appearance of the first fungi, and of the plants first in blossom. We

are told when mosses vegetate, and when insects first appear and disappear. There are also remarks with regard to fish and other animals; with miscellaneous observations and memoranda on various subjects. For instance, we are told that on the 21st of June, house-martins which had laid their eggs in an old nest, had hatched them, and that, when this is the case, they get the start of those which build new ones by ten days or a fortnight. He speaks with some degree of triumph of having ricked his meadow hay in delicate order, and that Thomas had seen a pole-cat run across his garden. He records the circumstance of boys playing at *taw* on the Plestor; and that he had set *Gunnery*, one of his bantam hens, on nine of her own eggs. He complains that dogs come into his garden at night and eat his gooseberries; and gives a useful hint to farmers and others, when he says that rooks and crows destroy an immense number of chaffers, and that were it not for these birds the chaffers would destroy everything. In addition to his remarks on natural history, Mr. White recorded in his diaries the visits which were occasionally paid him, and carefully notes down the births of his various nephews and nieces (amounting to about sixty-three at the time his diary closed), as they respectively came into the world. He "chronicled" his ale and beer, as they were brewed by his man Thomas, who appears to have been his valet, gardener, and assistant naturalist. He takes notice of the quantity of port wine which came to his share when he divided a pipe of it with some of his neighbours; and he makes frequent mention of his crops, his fine and early cucumbers, and the flavour of his Cardiline peas—he evidently passing much of his time in his garden. The appearance of his neighbours' hops, the beginning and ending of their harvests, their bees, pigs, and poultry, are also noticed in succession, and appear to have added to the interest he took in rural life." Perhaps the above passage supplies us with a better idea of the man than could be derived from any other source.

In 1768 Gilbert White commenced the remarkable series of letters which make up the "Natural History of Selborne"—letters which, as all the world knows, are matchless for the graphic minuteness of their details, and the naive simplicity of their style. It was with much difficulty that he could be prevailed upon to publish them; and had it not been for his brother Thomas, to whom he was indebted for many suggestions, and who promised to review them in a friendly way, and did so in the "Gentleman's Magazine," it is very problematical whether, owing to the author's fear of the ordeal of criticism, they would ever have seen the light. The habits of Gilbert White were uniformly temperate, his temper was cheerful and social, and his conversational powers are said to have been inimitable. He lived to a good old age, dying in his seventy-third year, on the 26th of June, 1793.

Starting from Salisbury, whither we had been for the purpose of looking at Stonehenge, with the result of which excursion the reader of the "Leisure Hour" is already acquainted,* our route to Selborne lay through Winchester, whence we were fortunate enough to find a conveyance to Alton, over a rather mountainous country. Resting for the night at

Alton, we set forth early the next morning, and ascending a gentle elevation at the back of the town, pursued a foot-path through the fields and farmsteads, which at length landed us in the carriage-road leading to Selborne, at about half the distance between that village and Alton. The narrow dusty road runs almost in a straight line from its junction with the field-path down into Selborne. As we approach within a mile or so of the village, the eye is prepared to appreciate its picturesque seclusion, by the spectacle, which gradually rises into view, of the bold hills crowned with massive foliage, which in a manner overhang the basin in which it lies concealed from sight.

The immediate approach to this charming place lies through a deep ravine in a rocky bank, at the bottom of which a clear stream of water flows across the road, which was formerly rendered passable to pedestrians by a rustic foot-bridge, while the bed of the brook was also the crown of the causeway for cattle and vehicles of all descriptions. Very lately, however, the stream has been arched over, and the road-way elevated some dozen feet, by which the artistic effect has been utterly destroyed—to the immense advantage and convenience, there is no gainsaying, of the few who ride or drive in and out of Selborne. The village itself is a model of rural repose and snug-looking rustic comfort, of the good old-fashioned order. It abounds in cottages, each a picture, with roofs of ponderous-looking thatch, pierced with shaded casements, and with low brick-built tenements, clustered round with climbing roses and creeping plants, and rarely rising far above the flowers and greenery among which they seem embedded. Along what may be termed the main street, these humble dwellings, mingled with others of a better class, stand in delightful irregularity, together with barns, sheds, and outhouses. Some of them are on a level and flush with the road; others retire to a distance behind gardens crammed with a profusion of flowers and ripe currants; and others again are perched upon high banks, whence they overlook their humbler neighbours.

On turning to the left, after ascending the hill from the brook, we enter the Pleystow, or Plaistor, a neat open space, where, upon a seat beneath a spreading tree, we look round. "This Pleystow," says Sir W. Jardine, "appears to have been left as a sort of redeeming offering by Sir Adam Gordon, in olden times an inhabitant of Selborne, well known in English history during the reign of Henry III, particularly as a leader of the Mountfort faction. Mr. White says: As Sir Adam began to advance in years, he found his mind influenced by the prevailing opinion (need we say, a vain and unscriptural one) of the reasonableness and efficacy of prayers for the dead; and therefore, in conjunction with his wife Constantia, in the year 1271, granted to the prior and convent of Selborne all his right and claim to a certain place, *placea*, called *La Pleystow*, in the village aforesaid, 'in liberam, puram, et perpetuam elemosinam' (for free charitable purposes). This *pleystow*, *locus ludorum*, or play-place, is in a level area near the church, of about 44 yards by 36, and is known by the name of *Plestor*. It continues still, as it was in old times, to be the scene of recreation for the youths and children of the neighbourhood; and impresses

* See "A Visit to Stonehenge," No. 94.

an idea on the mind that this village, even in Saxon times, could not be the most abject of places, when the inhabitants thought proper to assign so spacious a spot for the sports and amusements of its young people."

On the other side of the road fronting the Pleystow, and a little to the left, is the house of Gilbert White—a substantial but unpretending edifice, which, after being the abode of many successive generations of his family, has at length passed into the hands of a new proprietor. It is a modest but handsome cottage of two storeys, well shrouded in flowers and foliage, and lying a little back from the road, but from this point of view presents little to attract the attention of the stranger. On the other side of the Pleystow stands the Parsonage, a new and rather handsome building with three white gables fronting the view: it has the misfortune, however, to be quite out of keeping with its neighbours, and looks as though it had been transported bodily from a London suburb, and condemned to a temporary rustication for some breach of good behaviour.

Passing the Parsonage, we enter the churchyard, a shaded and tranquil spot, studded over with the graves and grave-stones of many a vanished generation. The church, with its low square tower, is apparently remarkable for little save its extreme simplicity and absence of ornament both within and without. The buttresses which support the outer walls are just so many magnified flights of the stone steps seen at rural inn-doors, by the aid of which fat farmers mount their nags when they ride home after market; and the principal decoration within is whitewash, the grand and universal panacea of rustic churchwardens. There is, however, a rather remarkable altar-piece, in three compartments, astonishingly like the works of Albert Durer, though how it came there we were unable to learn; and there is further, among other mural tablets, one to the memory of Gilbert White, which we shall be excused for not transcribing here. At the back of the church, and close to the wall of the building, there is a regular row of graves, marked only with a foot-stone to each, all of which are supposed to contain remains of members of the White family. The stones are so overgrown with cryptogamic moss and lichens, that it was with difficulty we could decipher the characters, now barely legible:—

G. W.
26 June,
1793.

Near the porch of the church stands a magnificent specimen of the yew, such as we do not recollect to have seen elsewhere. White himself describes it in terms which might have been written yesterday, so true is the portrait at the present moment. "In the churchyard of the village," says he, "is a yew tree whose aspect bespeaks it to be of great age. It seems to have seen several centuries, and is probably coeval with the church, and therefore may be deemed an antiquity. The body is short, squat and thick, and measures twenty-three feet in the girth, supporting a head of suitable extent to its bulk. This is a male tree, which in the spring sheds clouds of dust, and fills the atmosphere around with farina."

Returning through the Pleystow, we pursue our

way through the village, and crossing some rising grounds on the right, clamber up a rather rude ascent to the "Hanger," an abrupt precipitous hill overgrown with beech trees. A winding path of easy ascent leads us gradually to the top, through the deep gloom of the overhanging foliage, which rustles in noisy chorus as the branches nod gracefully to a strong breeze. At intervals, as we ascend, we remark that the timber has been felled to open out a view of the valley beneath, and at each opening circular seats have been erected for the accommodation of the wayfarer. We pause at the loftiest point of view, and while sketching the village as it lies asleep in the sunshine below, are startled by the sudden apparition of a huge kestrel hawk, which, hovering over the abyss beneath us, as motionless as though he were stuffed in a glass case, hangs for a moment or two in mid-air, and then swooping downwards like a dart, is lost in the thicket below. The majestic hunter of the air was doubtless in search of a dinner; and so soon as our sketch was completed, we too set forward on a similar quest.

We had the good fortune to find the landlord of the village inn on the point of sitting down, with his wife and charming "pigeon-pair" of laughing children, to the good old English fare of roast beef and pudding. Without more ado we invited ourselves to the entertainment, and being immediately installed in a seat at the table, did ample justice to the excellent cooking of the establishment. After dinner we took a stroll in the landlord's garden, where the fruit in tempting clusters supplied an excellent dessert. From conversation with our host, we learned that Selborne is now not so much a *terra incognita* to the rest of the world as it once was. Since the railway has reached to Alton, scarcely five miles off, London has sent down her visitors to the quiet village; and artists and authors are finding it out, and passing days and weeks in prying and sketching about the neighbourhood.

On parting with our host, we made for the residence of Gilbert White, with a view of inspecting, if permissible, a place so interesting to his admirers. The gentleman we sought was from home, but by the courtesy of his gardener, an intelligent Scotchman, we obtained admission to the grounds, and a view of the inner and real front of the residence. Humble as is the appearance of this abode when seen from the village street, its aspect on the other side is that of a perfect paradise. Neither art, good taste, nor expense have been spared in laying out the grounds and maintaining them in order; the grassy sward of the extensive lawn is smooth as a drawing-room carpet; rare plants and exquisite flowers delight the eye, and their fragrance fills the air; groups of noble trees adorn the landscape; and in the back-ground rises the lofty brow of the Hanger, swathed in an unbroken mass of rich foliage. About a furlong from the house stands a cluster of tall maple trees, beneath which was the favourite seat of Gilbert White, and leading towards them from the gravelled walks is the brick path which was laid down by Gilbert's father, that in his old age he might be able to walk into the fields in the early morning without wetting his feet. Though this walk was laid down more than a hundred

years ago, it is but little decayed, the bricks of which it is composed having been twice burned for this especial purpose. It would appear that this John White, the barrister, was a man of truly simple tastes, and that he retained them to the last: that he was a man of as simple piety may be gathered from the wording of his will, in which he expresses a wish that no monument should be erected to his memory, "not desiring to have his name recorded, save in the book of life."

The house so long the residence of the Whites was enlarged by Gilbert in 1777, who built one or two additional rooms, one of which is pointed out as his favourite study. The present proprietor has again enlarged it, and has wonderfully improved the surrounding domain, the aspect of which leaves nothing to wish for.

Having thus far satisfied our curiosity, and taken leave of our courteous guide, we proceeded through the valley of the Bourne, beyond the village, to take a glance at the Priory, which White describes so voluminously in his "Antiquities of Selborne." The Priory, which stood distant about a mile from Selborne, was founded in the year 1232 by Peter de la Roche, the bishop of Winchester, on his return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It was once an establishment of some repute, but was suppressed in 1468, and its revenues made over to Magdalen College, Oxford. It survived the loss of its conventual privileges and emoluments but for a season, and at length fell into decay and ruin. At the present time all vestiges of the ancient ecclesiastical building have disappeared, and its site is occupied by a farm house. The only visible relics of the establishment now remaining are a few encaustic tiles laid within a kind of summer-house, and an ancient stone coffin lately exhumed.

The sun is getting low as we leave the Priory, and warns us to make the best of our way to the Alton road. We regain it easily in half an hour, and being then overtaken by a light spring-cart, whose driver, being alone, courteously offers us a seat, we trot merrily back to Alton in the pleasant twilight of a summer's evening. From Alton to London is now but a two hours' ride by rail: and before the current of business has well set in next day, we have crossed Waterloo Bridge, and are hailing an omnibus, which in half an hour or so will drop us within a few paces of our own door.

Seven years ago the editor of a popular journal undertook a pilgrimage to Selborne, and published the particulars of his visit in his columns. His very agreeable and interesting paper contained some well-deserved strictures upon the deplorable ignorance of the labouring classes in the village, based upon the undeniable evidence of the parish register, which showed that of twenty-two persons who, in the year 1845, were united by marriage, *only seven knew how to sign their names!* a fact which he properly stigmatized as a national disgrace. We have reason to think that education has done something, though not much, since then, towards the diminution of such beggarly illiteracy; and we wish it were in our power to compliment the humbler dwellers in this charming spot upon even a corresponding advance in civilization and morals. But we must not flatter them; and the truth appears to be that there is a general feeling

among the respectabilities of Selborne, that the poorer classes in the district are fonder believers in the efficacy of beer—the majority of them at least—than in anything else, while there is a pretty loud complaint in the neighbouring town of Alton—a complaint which we have reason to believe is but too well founded—that Selborne sends a far greater proportion of offenders against the law to answer for their evil deeds before the magistrates of that town, than are to be found in almost any other place containing so small a population. This is a state of things that ought not to be, and will not be suffered to endure. The labouring classes of Selborne, if we may judge from their comfortable abodes, their sheltered and healthy situation, and from the fact that they participate in the profits of two harvests in the year—the hop as well as the cereal—are better off than their fellows in less-favoured districts. If it be true, then, that they lag behind them in the practice of the domestic virtues and the march of intellectual and moral progress, there must be "something rotten in the state" that should guide and influence the popular mind of this little secluded community.

A CHAPTER UPON SNAKES.

FROM the days when the wily serpent in Eden tempted our first mother Eve, down to the hour when the unfortunate Gurling, by his untimely and sudden end, gave fresh evidence, in the modern Zoological Gardens, of the deadly venom of the cobra de capello, the whole snake tribe have through all generations and in all countries inspired the implacable hatred and fear of men, birds, and the brute creation, although the greatest enemy, as well as the greatest victim, has undoubtedly been man. At his hands the snake has no mercy to hope for or expect; and from the snake he, in some unguarded moment, may in an instant receive that wound, whose puncture, though barely larger than the prick of a sharp-pointed needle, is the seal of his doom on earth. A few brief minutes, or perhaps an hour, and that stately being, the strength of whose heel could bruise the heads of a thousand such enemies, has become a lifeless, spiritless thing, gathered to the original dust from which he sprung. Snakes, we say, then, have been, and still continue, the aversion and terror of mankind, of fowls of the air, and of the denizens of the forest. Who, that has resided in the East, has not seen the terror and listened to the wild cries of some frightened bird, as, hovering fondly in the air over the nest that holds her yet unfledged progeny, she darts ever and anon, with a sharp peck at the hungry snake that is coolly breakfasting upon her family? If reader, you have never witnessed this, I have; ay, and have seen many other curious and unpleasant things connected with snakes, which are better to read of in anecdotes than to encounter.

To commence with my earliest experience, I may as well recount an incident that happened to me when I was too young to remember anything about it; but the story was so often referred to in after years, that I should grievously, indeed, lack memory if I did not hourly recollect it. My parents went out to India whilst I was quite an infant, and I believe

the first word I ever pronounced was "pambo," the vernacular term for snake. I presume my native wet-nurse must have instilled into me a due terror of what this word signifies, for it would appear that I sat up one night, bolt upright in bed, and screamed out at the pitch of my voice, "*pambo! pambo!*" At first no notice was taken of this warning note; but my mother, at length, laying hold of me in her arms to quiet me, took up the pillow to shake it well before replacing me, and there, sure enough, and to her inexpressible terror, she discovered a small carpet snake, carefully coiled up, being one of the most poisonous species after the cobra in all India. The only way in which I can solve this enigma is, that the snake must have crawled over and awoke me, and that being daily terrified by the threat of a pambo if I was naughty, or would not go to sleep, I had at once, young as I was, guessed that the snake had no business there.

Let not the reader, however, imagine that the fact of finding a snake in your bed, or in the house at all, must be of very rare occurrence. Unfortunately, it is in some places an every-day incident, especially during the monsoon months, when frogs hop into the lower chambers, and snakes, like detective officers, follow them, and instead of hauling them out, save all such trouble by gobbling them up on the spot. In such seasons it is no uncommon thing for an officer to find, when he turns out at four o'clock in the morning for parade, that a snake has taken possession of one boot and a scorpion of another. But, living in a country where such things are of frequent occurrence, makes people wary, and the native servants are always careful to shake a boot well before giving it to their masters.

I remember well a flood occurring at a place called Peramboor, in Madras, where the waters of the river had overflowed the banks, and communication from house to house was entirely cut off. We were all driven to inhabit solely the upper storey of the house; for though the lower one was pretty well elevated, the waters had risen so high that we were in momentary expectation that they would overflow and submerge the lower apartments. Never before or afterwards in my life have I witnessed such destruction of life among birds, beasts, and reptiles, as occurred in these few days. The lower rooms of the house, where the doors and windows had been left open expressly to admit of the water (should it rise so high) flowing through without impediment to its force, were a perfect caravanserai of beasts, birds, and reptiles, which had crept in, under cover of night, to exchange one painful death for another. A billiard table, which was too heavy to be moved, was a fine roosting-place for the feathered tribe. On it were partridges, quails, sparrows, hawks, and I know not how many other poor birds that had sought refuge from the torrents of rain and the gathering of waters, and whose nests were many feet below water. Some rooms were full of hares, some of mongooses, and all were replete with snakes, toads, and other reptiles. It is needless to say, that the latter were most un hospitably received; but in the universal fear that reigned around, and though doubtless oppressed with hunger, not even a snake had attempted to swal-

low a frog. Many of the birds and hares we fed and supported on charitable allowance till the waters abated, and they could again go forth and cater for themselves. Some, however, more timid than the others, rushed into the water and were drowned, or else flew away, and met with an equally dismal fate; but not one snake, or centipede, or scorpion, would budge an inch; they seemed in a torpid state, and I should be almost afraid to mention, even did I recollect correctly, the exact number of these venomous creatures that the servants destroyed during the time that our ark-like house was surrounded by deep waters.

Soon after this flood, I remember having my attention attracted by a violent chirruping amongst the sparrows that were flitting about from bough to bough, on a huge india-rubber tree close to my bed-room windows; and on going near to ascertain the cause, I discovered a poor cock-sparrow, dangling in the air, suspended by what appeared to me to be a piece of green tape. The bird was fluttering violently when I stretched forth my hand to undo the knot, and loosen the poor thing from its captivity. Judge, then, of my astonishment at seeing it whipped up into the tree in the twinkling of an eye. Looking up in amazement, I expected fully to see some urchin in the tree, who had been trapping the unhappy bird; in lieu of this, however, I saw what equally surprised me, a beautifully-coated green snake, at least a yard and a quarter in length, gliding noiselessly through the leaves, from which it could with difficulty be distinguished, with the unhappy sparrow dangling from its mouth. A stone or two soon made the felon drop his prize, but not before it had entirely deprived the wretched bird of sight, and sucked its brains out. These green snakes, which are very plentiful at Madras, are harmless with regard to men, but a most deadly enemy to the feathered tribe, concealing themselves, as they do so artfully, amongst bushes, and invariably making an unerring aim at the eyes of their victims.

I have witnessed the effects of fear, caused by snakes, on tigers, horses, dogs, cats, and antelopes, and the most courageous of these in facing and attacking a serpent is undoubtedly the cat, especially if she consider her young to be in danger. A friend of mine, in the civil service at Chittoor, had a pet tiger which he kept in a strong iron cage. Billy, as the tiger was called, would sometimes get so noisy and obstreperous that nothing would appease him but a good bamboozing, and to inflict this was both a difficult and a dangerous task. At last some one by accident threw a freshly-slain cobra at his cage, which, getting entangled amongst the bars, hung gloomily suspended. The tiger was so dreadfully alarmed at the appearance of this unwelcome neighbour, that he trembled from head to foot, and slunk into the furthest corner of his cage. Nor was this all; with his fore-claws, stuck out like spikes to receive the enemy, he carefully guarded his head, nor could he be induced to move one inch until the snake was removed. A monkey of mine, at Cochin, actually went into fits, fainted away, and became to all appearance dead, from excessive alarm at having a dead cobra (a cruel experiment, it must be admitted) fastened to its collar whilst asleep at night. I shall never forget the pallor of fear that overspread Jacko's face, on

opening his eyes and beholding the vicinity of the unwelcome disturber of his rest; nor his wild screams of terror, and ludicrous leaps into the air, when he found he could not disentangle himself from the loathsome touch of the snake.

On more than one occasion I have taxed a horse with obstinacy, whose remarkably keen eye and scent has saved his own life and perhaps mine. Riding over the rice-fields and plains near Cananore, no inducement, no whip or spur, could prevail upon him to advance one step. With ears erect and eyes almost starting out of his head, he would stare at what appeared to us vacant air. By-and-by the grass would move a little, and then a huge cobra uprear its hooded head. This was a signal for both horse and horseman to wheel round and be off at full speed; for these said cobras can, after raising themselves nearly upright in the air, make a wonderful spring, and fly as straight as an arrow across the road. Of cows and goats and buffaloes, I have seen whole herds put to flight by the apparition of a solitary snake; but the snakes are always (excepting in breeding seasons) as much alarmed as those they have frightened, and will wriggle away as fast as they can in an opposite direction.

Such is and ever has been the enmity existing between all other creatures and the snake; but the most formidable enemy of this reptile is undoubtedly the mongoose, who will go a mile out of his way to wreak his wrath upon it, and who invariably comes off victorious in the combat, absolutely biting his slain enemy into minute particles (though never by any chance eating any portion), and then flying for the secreted herb or grass, which he alone has been endowed with a knowledge of from his Maker, and which to him is an infallible remedy against the venom of the cobra.

I once witnessed a combat between a cobra and a female rat, and observed it, too, in rather unpleasant proximity, for both combatants fell from the roofing of the room where I was standing to within two yards of my feet. Having first secured a retreat, I looked on at the conflict through an open window, and a direful battle it was. The rat was too agile for the heavy movements of the snake, and for a long time escaped unscathed, whilst her enemy was desperately wounded. At last, however, the cobra inflicted a sting, and, as though aware that precaution was now useless, the poor rat rushed into close quarters, and firmly entangling her teeth in the throat of the venomous creature, never let go her grip again. Furiously did the snake plunge about, but all in vain; its enemy had fixed a death-gripe on its throat, and both the duellists fell in that combat. After research led to the discovery that the rat had faced this formidable foe to save the destruction of her young ones, for we found a nest of juvenile rats in the roofing, which met with little mercy at our hands, they being speedily all drowned.

Snakes are very fond of eggs and chickens; in procuring the latter dainty, however, they have a formidable enemy to encounter in the mother hen, who will fight for them as long as she has breath left in her body, her ruffled feathers acting as a shield against the venomous sting of the serpent.

But of all the adventures with snakes, one of the most appalling I ever remember to have heard of

occurred to a friend of mine, captain W—— of the Madras Horse Artillery. Captain W—— was stationed at St. Thomas's Mount, the then headquarters of the Madras Artillery; he was living in a small bungalow with his wife and children, and Mrs. W——, at this period, was in extremely delicate health, so much so that the slightest excitement or fear was liable to bring on a series of fainting fits. On the day on which the event occurred which I am now relating, captain W—— chanced to be on main-guard duty; he was captain of the day, and being obliged to visit the different guards at stated hours, he kept on his full-dress uniform, including his sword, throughout the day, for no one could tell the moment the brigadier might command his presence. Sitting down to dinner with his wife, they had just finished that repast, and the servants had cleared away the table, when suddenly down fell a huge cobra from the ceiling right upon the centre of the table, and instantly recovering the shock, it raised up its deadly hooded head, and hissing violently, rocked itself to and fro in front of the terrified lady, who had happily fainted away on the instant, for the slightest movement on her part would have been instant death, and the snake was narrowly watching for this movement to fly at its victim. As quick as thought, the captain had unsheathed his sword, and the next instant the snake's head flew across the room. This was indeed presence of mind; but there is every reason to suppose that, quick as the action was, help would have come too late had not Mrs. W—— providentially been too much paralyzed with fear to move or speak.

Such are a few of the truthful, though apparently marvellous, anecdotes of snakes, which are well known to all the natives and European residents of Madras. Yet the former are loath to destroy snakes, and the cobra is designated the *milla pambo*, or good snake, simply because death from its sting is more speedy, and attended with less suffering, than that inflicted by many other species of venomous serpents. Though the Hindoos, however, idolize their snakes, and will build round their haunts, feeding them carefully with milk and eggs, they are by no means so foolish as to admit them to any closer intimacy; and if a snake presumes to intrude upon their quarters, he is instantly expelled with noises of tomtoms. Not so, however, the snakes in Egypt and Syria—at least, one peculiar species, termed the household snake, from their invariably taking up their abode with men. These, though hateful to the sight and loathsome to the touch of the natives, are revered and countenanced as a necessary evil by Moslems, Christians, and idolaters, and also by not a few of the old European inhabitants who have dwelt half a century in those countries, and imbibed most of the prejudices and superstitions of the natives. Every house has its male and female household snake; they inhabit some nook or corner in the wall or in the store-houses, and though they venture out of a day, and are frequently seen by the inmates, no one ever thinks of noticing or interfering with their movements, unless, indeed, it be to get out of their way as speedily as possible. Marvellous stories are bandied about and handed down as traditional lore from father to son respecting these snakes. They are said to peculiarly

patronise infants and young mothers, being attracted by the smell of their much-loved, dainty milk, though how or when a snake should have acquired this taste it is hard to imagine. Still they doubtless do like milk, for I have had ocular demonstration of this fact, saucers full of milk being placed under the beds where mothers and infants sleep, to satisfy the yearnings of the serpent family. These snakes are reputed amongst the natives to be of a most unforgiving disposition, so that if you harm one, the whole colony will be up in arms and seeking for vengeance. Another superstition, too, credited amongst them is, that when a daughter marries out of a family and removes to the house of her husband, the old snake, provided he has been kindly used by the parties, sends his eldest son and his wife to go and settle in some wall in the same house; and it is considered a very propitious omen to the newly-married couple, if the black snake cross their pathway during the first week of their marriage.

Such, and a hundred other absurdities, are recounted of these household snakes, which here live in perfect harmony with man, who is elsewhere usually their greatest enemy. Most probably the origin of this unseemly familiarity traces itself back to the black days of Paganism in the East, and is one of the many relics which has yet to be uprooted. The serpents are innocuous of their kind, nor, indeed, all over Syria, have any, so far as we know, of a deadly nature been discovered. These snakes, however, are particularly harmless, and if they sometimes annoy and alarm you with their presence, they make ample amends for this by the service rendered in the quantities of mice and rats they destroy or intimidate; indeed, were it not for them and the cats, living would scarcely be possible in any house in any part of Syria.

VISIT TO A SPANISH OLIVE FARM.

In a lively book of travel and adventure along the "Bridle Roads of Spain," from the pen of Mr. G. J. Cayley, who recently visited the country in search of health and recreation, is a brief description of an olive farm and olive-oil manufactory, which may interest some of our readers. The establishment, situated a few miles from Seville, belonged to the Marques de Castilleja, who personally accompanied our tourist on his visit, and kindly entertained him at his country-house. They together left Seville, attired for the occasion in the Andalusian costume, and after passing dark-green orange groves interspersed with the still darker cypress, and following a track lined with wild olives, with here and there the aloe lifting its gigantic spikes above them, the travellers came upon the bushy *dehesa*, or wilderness. Having pursued this region for a time, the *dehesa*, says Mr. Cayley, changed to olive-groves, and we got into mazy private roads which wound among the trees. At last, after about three hours and a half on the road, we came in sight of a long low mass of white building, with a pinnacle-mounted gateway, through which we passed, amid the greetings of a motley crowd of retainers, into a vast court-yard, around which were the establishments for grinding the olives and storing the oil, besides stables and dwell-

ings for the retainers. Here, leaving the red and yellow calesa in which we had journeyed, we went through an iron gate into a *patio* with a fountain and marble arches and columns. The house was a curious rambling arrangement of corridors and passages, and galleries hung with quaint old family portraits in wigs and brocade, and likenesses of the kings of Judah, signalized with their respective names in yellow paint.

Having inspected the house, and lunched, each of us now armed himself with a polished yew club, which appears to be the legitimate companion of predial inspection, and sallied forth. This stick (called *porro*) is about five or six feet long, often forked at the smaller end, and is held a little above the middle with the heavy knob on the ground, so that when you walk it swings between its planting-places like a pendulum. The one the marquis used was a sort of hereditary rural sceptre, which had descended to him from the hands of his father and grandfather, and very likely from their fathers and grandfathers to them.

We first went to see the olive-mill. In form it very much resembles a chocolate-mill; a huge wheel of granite, shaped like the thick end of a cane, rolls round a piece of timber on which it is pivoted, being drawn by a mule yoked to a crooked beam. This beam, jutting from the central timber, bends over the wheel, receiving half way the other end of its axle. On the opposite side of the central timber—which is also pivoted in the stone crushing-floor and a beam of the roof—there is a wooden funnel full of olives. This keeps slowly laying down the plump purple berries, which the roller, as it comes round, keeps crushing with a fat crackling sound, not unlike that which proceeds from the basting of meat, only on a larger scale. The pulp, as it accumulates, is shovelled off and placed in layers between round mats under the press. These mats are about six feet in diameter, and have a hole in the middle. When there is a sufficient pile of pulp and mat sandwiches, the whole is wetted with hot water, and the press—an immense lever about forty feet long—comes down upon it, being lifted at the other end by a screw, with spokes like a capstan. The oil, of course, floats on the surface of the water, and is run off into tanks.

Having seen how the oil was made, we went out to see how the olives were gathered, accompanied by Ramoncillo, the gamekeeper—a strange, lurching vagabond who squinted at right angles, and had all his arms and legs of different lengths. After wandering some time among the devious paths of the olive-grove, we found the little colony of gatherers; for colony it seemed, being composed of men, women, and children, down to the smallest possible dimensions. The babies, who had usually a very little girl to take care of them—unless they were slung up in a *manta* out of the way among their metaphorical brotherhood of olive branches—sprawled and babbled around head-quarters.

Here, by a purple mountain of spoil, stood the general of the little army, who, in all directions, were waging war with the trees of peace, besieging them with scaling-ladders and belabouring them with long staves. The women were on their knees underneath, picking up the bright little berries as they rained from the beaten boughs.

I tasted an olive, though I was aware it was not likely to be good. Let the reader imagine a rotten morel cherry soaked in oil, and he will not be far from having an idea of a ripe olive, except that there is a bitter, astringent after-taste, which sticks in the throat and prickles on the tongue for some time. The green olives, which we eat in their pickled state, are no more like the ripe, than pickled walnuts are like the walnuts of dessert.

When any of the women had filled their baskets, they came with them on their heads to the purple mountain aforesaid, and discharged their gatherings upon the heap. If there was much leaf and rubbish mixed with the fruit, the woman tilted up her basket behind and let a slender stream of olives fall from above her forehead, while a man with a flapping sack winnowed away the lighter matters. Over the heap stood guard the steward, or *capataz*, an ancient man, with a grizzly stubble on his chin (for it was Saturday), standing with his legs apart, broadly planted in the dignity of his office. The straddling supporters of this weight of importance were encased in what seemed in front to be a pair of brown sheepskin breeches, but from behind revealed themselves to be but a slit apron fastened with thongs round each leg. Both his hands were on his hips, with each thumb hooked in the folds of his faja, and in the fingers of his right was a crooked whittle, with which, ever and anon, as the basketfuls arrived, he would nick the score upon notch-sticks which hung in a curve of string between two branches of olive hard by. These sticks were regular tallies. Each basket had a couple of loops, in which the gatherer's stick rested, and when the basket was discharged, the bearer presented it to the *capataz*. He, fitting it on to its brother on the line, nicked them both with his eagle-beaked blade.

The sun went down, and we returned to the farm. We found the olive-mills still working, lighted by flaring wicks, in iron saucers, of its own oil. We next re-entered the house, where, at the end of one of the galleries, a great wood fire was burning on the hearth. Here we wiled away the time till supper, which, though bespoken at nine, made its appearance at eight; for in Spain meals, as well as all other arrangements, are ruled more by a general approximation to the fitness of things than by any precise hours. The supper comprised *gazpacho* and salad, and eggs fried in oil, with a little cold chicken and ham to eke out. We then retired to our blazing fireside, which flared with a brilliant white flame, from the oily oil of the olive-press which had been thrown on to it; and soon afterwards retired to bed.

THE HARP OF PITCAIRN.

THE following lines, independent of their intrinsic merit, derive much interest from their being transmitted to us from Pitcairn's Island, the retreat of the well-known mutineers of the "Bounty."

You ask how I feel in the prospect of death,
And whether the grave has no terrors for me;
If bright are my hopes, and unshaken my faith,
And to whom for relief in my sufferings I flee—
The questions are weighty, and I am so weak,
Yet will I endeavour an answer to give;
And this is the substance of what I would speak—
I believe! I believe!

On the brink of the grave, it has pleased my Lord
To keep me long waiting the word to depart;
And though for dismissal I oft have implored,
Yet he has forgiven the thought of my heart.
Though often impatient and prone to complain,
Much love in this chast'ning I plainly perceive;
Our Father afflicts not his children in vain:
I believe! I believe!

This body, so wasted by lingering disease,
That scarce to the worms it can furnish a meal,
Insatiate death as a trophy may seize,
And in me the sad fruits of transgression reveal.
But must I for ever continue his prey?
No! Jesus my dust from the grave shall retrieve;
The call to arise I will gladly obey:
I believe! I believe!

On this earth, on this earth, my Redeemer shall stand,
And these eyes, almost sightless, his glories behold;
My powers so contracted, with knowledge expand,
And this heart throb with rapture, though now beating cold.
His voice I shall hear, and in accents divine,
Shall I there, when made worthy, a welcome receive;
Oh! to dwell in his presence for ever be mine;
I believe! I believe!

This, then, is my hope, nor am I deceived,
On the word of my God I can fully depend;
I know by the Spirit on whom I've believed,
And he will support and control to the end;
Immanuel's death hath Jehovah appeased,
That death on the cross did my ransom achieve—
That death is a passport when I am received—
I believe! I believe! Yes, I firmly believe.

IS THERE AN UNBELIEVER?

[From an American Journal.]

SOME twenty years ago the patronage of the English butterflies of fashion was divided between two song-writers—Thomas Moore and Thomas Haynes Bayly, both of them now in the grave. Sparks from their "crackling thorns" were greatly admired for a time; but whatever belongs to humanity must soon decline, and poor Bayly, long before his death, became the subject of neglect and destitution. In the season of his poverty, and it is hoped of his penitence, he wrote the following lines. They appeared at the time in the "Globe."

Is there an unbeliever?
One man who walks the earth
And madly doubts that Providence
Watch'd o'er him at his birth?
He robs mankind for ever
Of hope beyond the tomb;
What gives he as a recompense?
The brute's unhallo'd doom.

In manhood's loftiest hour,
In health, and strength, and pride,
O! lend his steps through alleys green
Where rills 'mid cowslips glide;
Climb Nature's granite tower,
Where man hath rarely trod;
And will he then, in such a scene,
Deny there is a God?

Yes, the proud heart will ever
Prompt the false tongue's rep'y!
An Omnipresent Providence
Still madly he'll deny.
But see the unbeliever
Sinking in death's decay;
And hear the cry of penitence!
He never learnt to pray.